

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SP-02 INR-05 PM-03 NSC-05 NSCE-00
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R 160940Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 464
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 12422

LIMDIS

DEPT PASS DOD FOR ISA AND DIA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR MARR MPOL MOPS IR MU YS
SUBJ: IRANIAN PHANTOM DOWNED BY PDRY

REF TEHRAN 12313

1. EVENING DECEMBER 15 FOREIGN MINISTER KHALATBARY RESPONDED TO DCM'S QUERY EARLIER IN THE DAY ON PRESENT STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS TO RETURN IRANIAN PILOT. KHALATBARY SAID HE HAD BEEN TOLD WHEN HE WAS IN SAUDI ARABIA ON DECEMBER 13 THAT PILOT WOULD BE RETURNED IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE ON A "HADJ" FLIGHT. THIS CORRESPONDS ROUGHLY IN TIME WITH REPORT RECEIVED HERE DECEMBER 13 THAT PILOT WOULD BE RETURNED IMMINENTLY (REFTLE). KHALATBARY CONFIRMED THAT PILOT HAD NOT ARRIVED AND HE HAD HEARD NOTHING FURTHER ABOUT HIM AS YET. HE SAID HE WAS PLANNING TO ASK SAUDIS STATUS OF THIS CASE TODAY, DECEMBER 16.

2. KHALATBARY SAID IRAN WAS NOT NEGOTIATING IN ANY SENSE ON THIS QUESTION WITH PDRY. HE SAID SAUDI ARABIA AND KUWAIT ARE NOT RPT NOT MEDIATING EITHER. IRAN HAS MADE ITS POSITION CLEAR THAT IT REQUIRES RETURN OF THE PILOT AND AN IRANIAN OBSERVER MUST BE PRESENT AT ANY SALVAGE ATTEMPT OF THE WRECKAGE. HE CONFIRMED EARLIER REPORTS THAT IRAN MAY TAKE
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THE MATTER TO THE UN IF SAUDI-KUWAITI EFFORTS DO NOT SUCCEED.

KHALATBARY NOTED THAT PDRY CLAIMS THE PLANE WAS FLYING OVER ITS TERRITORY, BUT PDRY SEEMS TO OVERLOOK PROBABILITY THAT PLANE GLIDED FROM OMANI TO PDRY TERRITORY AFTER IT WAS HIT AND OUT OF CONTROL.

3. COMMENT: AS READERS OF COLLATERAL INTELLIGENCE ARE AWARE, THIS SUBJECT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PURSUED BY IRANIANS THROUGH MORE THAN ONE CHANNEL. KHALATBARY'S REMARKS ABOVE REPRESENT THE LATEST GOI OFFICIAL POSITION. IT IS CLEAR GOI HAS NO INFORMATION INDICATING PILOT HAS ACTUALLY LEFT PDRY. HOWEVER, IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER GOI POSITION THAT OBSERVER BE PRESENT WHEN PLANE WRECKAGE IS SALVAGED REPRESENTS A STIFFENING ONLY OF IRAN'S OVERT STANCE OR IS A REFLECTION OF A MORE BASIC GOI DECISION TO REVERT TO HARDER INITIAL POSITION ON ALL NEGOTIATIONS (EVEN THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS THAN KHALATBARY) IN VIEW OF SAUDI FAILURE TO PRODUCE SATISFACTORY RESULTS TO DATE.
HELMS

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